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978-1-107-01177-9 - Handbook of Research Methods in Social and Personality Psychology: Second Edition
Edited by Harry T. Reis and Charles M. Judd
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HANDBOOK OF RESEARCH METHODS IN SOCIAL AND PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY

Second Edition

This indispensable sourcebook covers conceptual and practical issues in research design in the field of social and personality psychology. Key experts address specific methods and areas of research, contributing to a comprehensive overview of contemporary practice. This updated and expanded second edition offers current commentary on social and personality psychology, reflecting the rapid development of this dynamic area of research over the past decade. With the help of this up-to-date text, both seasoned and beginning social psychologists will be able to explore the various tools and methods available to them in their research as they craft experiments and imagine new methodological possibilities.

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Second Edition

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Introduction to the Second Edition

When we put together the first edition of this *Handbook*, published in 2000, we scarcely could have imagined the pace with which methodological innovation would occur in social and personality psychology. To be sure, we hoped that the field's relentless pursuit of ever-more creative and precise methods would continue – a pursuit that the book was intended to encourage. Our expectation was that a new edition would be needed somewhere in the far distant future. A mere 13 years later, that time has come. Social-personality psychologists have advanced the frontiers of methodology at a far faster rate than we anticipated, so much so that the prior volume of this *Handbook* no longer did justice to the diverse approaches and methods that define the field's cutting-edge research. With these advances in mind, we set out to provide under a single cover a compendium of the most important and influential research methods of contemporary social-personality psychology.

Our goal for this volume is the same as it was for the prior edition: to inform and inspire young researchers to broaden their research practices in order to ask and answer deeper, more finely grained questions about social life. One sometimes hears that methodological innovation provides little more than an incremental gain on what is already known. In our opinion, this view is short-sighted. As Greenwald (2012) observed, the great majority of Nobel Prizes in the sciences have been awarded for methodological advances rather than for theoretical contributions. This, he reasons, is because of the synergy between methodology and theory: Existing theories point to the need for new methods, which then suggest questions that could not have been envisioned, much less investigated, with older methods. In this way, new methods open the door to better understanding of phenomena.

Social-personality psychologists have always been quick to capitalize on new methods and technical innovations to further their exploration of the processes that govern social behavior. Although the field continues to be criticized for overrelying on laboratory experiments conducted with college student samples, we believe that this criticism is short-sighted. As this volume illustrates, social-personality psychologists conduct research using diverse approaches, ranging from neuroscientific methods to observational coding of live interaction, from implicit assessments to everyday experience studies, and from priming outside of awareness to population-based surveys. Furthermore, the Internet has made possible access to diverse and specialized samples, an opportunity that social-personality psychologists have eagerly embraced. Add to this the sophisticated insights afforded by new or improved statistical innovations such as dyadic data analysis, mediation analysis, and multilevel models, and it is readily apparent that our theories are built on a rich, complex, and mature empirical foundation.

We suspect that our receptivity to innovation is one reason for the growing popularity and influence of social-personality psychology. Membership in the Society for Personality and Social Psychology has more than doubled since 2000, and social-personality psychologists are now often found in schools of business, medicine, and law. The influence of our work extends well beyond the field's traditional borders, so much so that Yang and Chiu (2009), in an analysis of citation patterns in APA journals, identified social psychology as being positioned at the center of the psychological sciences. We believe that this influence is at least partly attributable to our leadership in championing methodological innovation. For example, Baron and Kenny's classic paper on moderation and mediation, published in the *Journal of Personality and Social*

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Psychology in 1986, is the most cited article of all time in scientific psychology, with more than 34,000 citations at the time of this writing.

Changes in the field's methodology do not occur in a vacuum, of course. Two important developments have been the rapid increase in digital technology and miniaturization, which have led directly to implicit methods, fMRI, and portable devices for recording details of everyday behavior, as well as in the accessibility of the Internet, which has opened the door to a broader pool of research participants. Other kinds of changes have also been influential. For example, the past decade has seen impressive gains in statistical methods. Although many of these methods are computationally complex, they encourage researchers to ask far more intricate and revealing questions than could be asked with *t*-tests, ANOVAs, and correlations. These changes notwithstanding, careful readers will note that our approach to the research process is still grounded in the basics: a concern for internal validity, an appreciation for the complexity of generalizability, and the realization that the most useful and accurate insights will come from programs of research that incorporate multiple, diverse methods.

An easy way to see the rapid pace of methodological innovation in social-personality methods is to compare this edition of the *Handbook* to its predecessor. The roster of chapters in the current edition represents an extensive revision from the earlier volume. Twelve chapters are entirely new to this volume, discussing topics whose particulars or importance have emerged since publication of the prior volume. These include treatments of field research, implicit methods, methods for social neuroscience and behavior genetics, research on the Internet, methods for studying emotion and dynamical systems, multilevel models, advanced psychometrics, missing data, and mediation and moderation. An additional introductory chapter presents a compelling picture of why we do research. Readers of the first edition will notice that six chapters have been dropped, not because of diminished relevance but rather because there was no way to include them and still have the space necessary to describe newer methods. The remaining chapters have been, in most cases, thoroughly revamped to reflect recent developments in method or application. We believe that the result depicts state-of-the-art methods in social-personality psychology, at least (we feel compelled to point out) for today.

When the two of us entered the field, in the 1970s, a young social-personality psychologist could be considered well trained after taking two courses in statistics and measurement and one in methods. Fortunately, that is no longer the case; methodological training in most graduate programs is far more extensive and continues for the duration of one's career. Although some may see this as a daunting challenge, we prefer to see it as a sign of the health and vigor of our discipline. Social-personality psychologists are dedicated to obtaining the most enlightening, accurate, and useful understanding of the social world in which we live. Taking advantage of methodological innovation to imagine and address newer, more informative questions is the surest way we know to continue the progress of the past few decades. We hope this volume serves as a springboard for the next generation of theoretical advances in social and personality psychology.

Our every expectation is that the methodological advances in the years since the first edition of this volume will only continue to accumulate in the years ahead. We have little doubt that the future promises more appropriate and sophisticated models of data, greater attention to process and mechanisms, increased insights from neuroscientific explorations, greater attention to data from diverse samples and settings, and increased insights in the measurement of automatic responses. And we have no doubt that there are further advances lurking down the road that will come with some surprise. Accordingly, in another dozen years (or perhaps sooner), we suspect it will be time for a third edition of this volume. One certain prediction that we make is that we will not be the editors of that edition. But we trust that others will realize the excitement of witnessing the methodological vitality of the field by preparing that next edition. Throughout this volume we have loved providing witness to the advances in research methods mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

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Introduction to the First Edition

HARRY T. REIS AND CHARLES M. JUDD

It is no accident, we believe, that many of the most influential methodologists in the behavioral sciences happen to identify themselves as social-personality psychologists. Throughout the methodological literature in psychology, citations to Robert Abelson, Donald Campbell, Thomas Cook, Donald Fiske, David Kenny, and Robert Rosenthal, to name just a few, are ubiquitous. The reason we believe that this is not an accident is that social-personality psychologists have set for themselves a particularly challenging methodological task. Their domain of inquiry concerns all of social behavior, from intergroup relations and large-scale social conflict to dyadic interaction and close relationships. They study individual judgments, cognitions, and affects about social phenomena as well as the evolution of social norms and interdependent behaviors at the level of societies. Most recently, entire cultures, and the belief systems associated with them, have become a major area of interest. And, in the tradition of Kurt Lewin, social-personality psychologists are firmly committed to a rigorous empirical approach to whatever they study. They are convinced that a strong and reciprocal relationship between theory and evidence is fundamental to the acquisition of knowledge: that data demand good theories and that theories demand quality data.

As a result, social-personality psychologists have developed and made use of an extensive array of methodological tools. Although the field is sometimes criticized for an overreliance on laboratory experimentation, in fact the diversity of methodological approaches represented in the leading journals is impressive. From surveys to simulations, from laboratory experiments to daily event recordings, from response latency and physiological measures to think-aloud protocols, and from the Internet and palmtop computers to paper-and-pencil reports, the diversity of research designs and procedures, measurement methods, and analytic strategies that social psychologists employ is, in our view, extraordinary.

Our goal in putting together this *Handbook* was to provide a series of state-of-the-art presentations spanning both traditional and innovative methods that have moved and continue to move the discipline forward. The product, we believe, documents the incredible wealth of methodological tools that social-personality psychologists have at their disposal. Intentionally, we sought to include chapters that might strike some readers as a bit unusual in a book devoted to research methods. Certainly, some of these topics would not have been included in a book of this sort 20, or perhaps even 10, years ago. So, for example, chapters by Hastie and Stasser on simulation, Collins on studying growth and change, McClelland on transformations and outliers, Bargh and Chartrand on cognitive mediation, Reis and Gable on daily experience methods, and Blascovich on psychophysiological measures are a far cry from the traditional chapters on design, measurement, and analysis that one might routinely expect in a research methods textbook. Several statistics chapters are included because we believe that new developments in statistical methodology make it possible to extract valuable insights about social psychological phenomena from data collected with diverse methods in many different settings.

But then, it was not our goal to provide yet another research methods textbook cataloging standard procedures and principles. Many excellent textbooks serving this function are already available. Although this *Handbook* might well be used as a textbook, our goal was more ambitious than teaching the field's traditional core. Rather, we sought to demonstrate and highlight the tremendous methodological

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richness and innovativeness to be found in social psychological research, and additionally, to provide social-personality psychologists with resources for expanding the methodological diversity employed in their research.

Such innovation is central to the legacy we have inherited from the field's founders. Social-personality psychologists value their reputation as both rigorous and clever methodologists; indeed, among the behavioral sciences, social psychologists are notorious for their exacting methodological standards and for the pinpoint precision with which the fit of evidence to theory is scrutinized. These practices reflect two considerations: the growth of a cumulative literature, which allows researchers to ask ever-finer questions about phenomena and their mediators and moderators, and the availability of new technologies capable of providing information not even imagined a generation or two ago. For example, researchers rarely investigated questions of mediation in the 1960s. With the advent of computerized tests of cognitive mediation, sophisticated measures of physiological mediation, and co-variance structure methods for evaluating mediational models, these questions have become commonplace. A guiding principle in preparing this volume was that theoretical and methodological questions are not independent. Theory leads us to choose and extend existing methods and search for new tools; methods get us thinking about new ways to test and refine our constructs.

One of Donald Campbell's seminal and lasting contributions is the notion that validity is achieved only through triangulation, by using a variety of methodological approaches and procedures. In its original formulation, this argument primarily addressed the validity and reliability of measurement: through multiple diverse indicators one could eliminate both random and systematic measurement errors and arrive at more accurate appraisals of underlying constructs (e.g., Campbell & Fiske, 1959). We, as researchers, were taught that such a multifaceted measurement approach ought to be employed in each and every study that we conducted.

The discipline is coming to realize that this sort of triangulation is fundamental not simply in measurement but in all aspects of methodology. In this sense, then, it is fitting that the first chapter in this *Handbook*, by one of Donald Cambell's students, Marilynn Brewer, sets the tone for the entire volume. Brewer argues that only through the use of multifaceted research strategies, adopted not only within individual studies but also, and much more important, across an entire program of research, is research validity in its broadest sense achieved. All the diversity that is represented in this volume, and the diversity of methods and approaches yet to be developed, is essential if social-personality research is to produce valid findings, defining validity in its most comprehensive sense: that our conclusions and theories ultimately provide accurate understandings of the social world that we inhabit.

Putting together this volume has inspired in us great pride in social-personality psychology's commitment to methodological rigor and innovation, as well as in the methodological richness of contemporary social psychology. Our hope is that this volume will similarly inspire both new and established researchers alike to broaden and enhance their methodological practices. Additionally, we hope the volume will serve as a stimulus for yet unknown approaches and procedures that further contribute to the validity of the research we conduct. Our legacy as social-personality psychologists mandates that we continue to capitalize on methodological and technological innovations in the service of ever more informative and useful theories and knowledge.

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